

TOP SECRET

SECRET

CONFIDENTIAL

UNCLASSIFIED

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CIA OPERATIONS CENTER

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WASHINGTON (AP) -- CIA CHIEF WILLIAM COLBY SAID TODAY THAT CONGRESSIONAL EFFORTS TO SPEED THE DECLASSIFICATION OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS WOULD ENDANGER THE COUNTRY'S INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS.

"I WOULD FIND IT VERY DIFFICULT . . . TO URGE A FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE OR A STRATEGICALLY PLACED INDIVIDUAL IN A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT OR A FOREIGN COUNTRY TO COOPERATE WITH THIS AGENCY AND TO PROVIDE INFORMATION IN CONFIDENCE IF THE LAW OF THIS COUNTRY REQUIRED THAT SUCH INFORMATION BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC TWO YEARS LATER," COLBY SAID IN TESTIMONY TO A HOUSE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE.

THE SUBCOMMITTEE IS CONSIDERING AMENDMENTS TO THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT THAT WOULD REQUIRE ALL DOCUMENTS LABELED SECRET AND CONFIDENTIAL TO BE DECLASSIFIED WITHIN TWO YEARS. MOST TOP-SECRET MATERIAL WOULD BE PUBLISHED WITHIN THREE YEARS UNLESS IT WAS "OF THE HIGHEST IMPORTANCE" TO THE NATIONAL DEFENSE.

UNDER CURRENT PROCEDURES, MOST DOCUMENTS MUST BE DECLASSIFIED WITHIN 10 YEARS WHILE THE PUBLIC IS ALLOWED TO REQUEST A MANDATORY REVIEW OF MATERIALS WHICH ARE EXEMPTED FROM DECLASSIFICATION.

HOWEVER, JAMES GOODALE, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE NEW YORK TIMES, TOLD THE SUBCOMMITTEE THAT DECLASSIFICATION REQUESTS MADE BY THE TIMES MET "AN INGENUOUSLY DESIGNED SERIES OF BUREAUCRATIC OBSTACLES." OF 51 REQUESTS MADE FOR DOCUMENTS THAT WERE "AT LEAST 10 YEARS OLD," THE TIMES WAS GRANTED ONLY FIVE, GOODALE SAID IN A PREPARED STATEMENT.

"AS OF TODAY, WE HAVE NOT EVEN RECEIVED THE COURTESY OF STATUS REPORTS ON REQUESTS THAT HAVE BEEN PENDING FOR 18 MONTHS OR MORE," GOODALE ADDED.

"IN SHORT, OUR EXPERIENCE TO THE PRESENT DAY UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT HAS BEEN ONE OF FRUSTRATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT."

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These comments represent the initial and tentative reaction of the CIA Operations Center and of the appropriate analytic component in the Agency to the attached item from the news wire services.